

The eighth plague: the locusts

10:1 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh.

[For see what I have done:] [I have made heavy] his heart and the heart of his servants [in order that] [I may place] these signs among them.

2 [And in order that] [you may recount] in the ears of your children [and of your children’s children]

[about how] [I made] a mockery of Egypt, [and about the signs] which I placed among them, and you will know that I am YHWH.”

3 So came—Moses and Aaron—to Pharaoh, and they said [this to him]: “Thus says YHVH, the God of the Hebrews, until when will you refuse to submit before Me? Send out My people, that they may serve Me.

4 [For indeed], if you refuse to send forth My people, behold, [I will bring], even tomorrow, the locust to your borders.

5 It will cover the surface of the earth so that one won’t be able to see the ground. [They will consume] | what is left [of what escaped], and what [was spared you from the hail; they will devour all the trees that grew for you from the field.

6 They will fill your houses, the houses [of all your servants], and the houses of all of Egypt; which was not seen by your fathers—or by your fathers’ fathers—[since the day] that they came to the land right up until today.” And Moses turned, and went out, from Pharaoh.

7 Then spoke the servants of Pharaoh [these words to him]: “How long [will this one] be to us as a snare?

Send away the people; let them serve YHWH their God. Do you not yet see that on the brink of ruin is Egypt?

8 [They were brought back]—Moses and Aaron—to Pharaoh, and he said to them, “Go and serve the YHWH your God. Who among you will be going?”

9 And answered Moses, “With our young ones and our old ones we will go, with our sons and with our daughters, with our sheep and with our cattle we will go, for it is a festival to God [for all of us].”

10 Pharaoh said [this to them]: “[May it be] that YHWH [is with you] [in the same way] that I send you out with your children. [Is it plain to see] that ill-intent shows in your faces.”

11 [It will not] [be this way!] Go now, [let the men], go and serve YHWH, for that is what you seek to do.” [And they were driven] out [end aliyah] from the presence of Pharaoh.

12 Then said YHWH to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the land of Egypt, to bring the locust. [It will come up] on the land of Egypt. It will consume all the foliage in the land: everything—all that has remained from the hail.”

10:13 [So he reached out]—Moses [raised his staff] over the land of Egypt, [and YHWH] drove [a wind from the east], [through the land]: all that day, [and into the night]. When morning came, the wind from the east had borne the locusts.

14 [They went up]—the locusts—over the whole land of Egypt, settling in the entire border of Egypt, heavy indeed. [In prior times] [there had not been] [such a swarm] of locusts like this one, [and in later times] it would not happen again.

15 [The locusts covered up]—[hiding from view]—[the entire ground], bringing darkness over the earth. [They ate up] all the foliage [of the land], [as well as] all the fruit of the trees [that had been spared] by the hail. [There did not remain] [anything green] [either on the trees] or of the grass of the field, in the entire land of Egypt.

16 [Quickly then], Pharaoh summoned Moses and Aaron. [And he said this], “[Guilty am I] before YHWH your God, [and before you].

17 [And now I ask]: bear—I pray—my guilt, [just this] [one more time], and plead with YHWH your God, that He remove what is over me—[just take away] this death that is here.”

18 [He went out] from the presence of Pharaoh, and prayed to YHWH.

19 [But the wind was turned back]: YHWH [took a wind from the west]—a wind strong indeed, which carried all the locusts [and hurled them] into the sea of reeds. [There did not] remain any locusts—even one—in all the borders of Egypt.

20 But hardened by YHWH was the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not send free the children of Israel.

The ninth plague: the darkness

21 And said YHWH to Moses, “Stretch out your hand to the heavens, and there will be darkness over *Eretz Mitsrayim*. [They will *feel*] darkness.

22 [He lifted his hands]—[Moses raised] his hands to the heavens.

[And there appeared] [a darkness quite thick] in the whole land of Egypt, which lasted three days.

23 [No one could see]—[no man could] [see his brother], [nor *could* one get up]—a man from his place—for those three days.

[Except that for all] [*B’nei Yisrael*] [end aliyah] there was light [in the place that they lived].

24 And called Pharaoh for Moses, [and told him], “Go! and serve YHWH. [You only must leave] your flocks and your herds behind.

[Even your children] [may go with you].”

25 And replied Moses, “[Then *you* must provide]—placing in our hands—sacrifices and offerings, [that we may present them] to YHWH our God.

26 [But also *our* livestock] must [go with us as well]. [There will not] [be left behind], [one hoof]. Because, [some of them] [we must take] to serve YHWH our God, and we [as yet do not know] [how we are to serve] YHWH [when we arrive] at that place.

10:27 But stiffened by YHWH [was Pharaoh's] heart, and he was not willing [to send them free].

28 Replying to him, Pharaoh said, "Be gone from me! [And I warn you]: [You better beware]—never again must you see my face, [since as soon as you do], [on the day] you again see my face, [you surely will die]."

29 To this replied Moses, "You have spoken well. Never again will I see your face."

Moses proclaims the death of the first-born

11:1 Then said YHWH to Moses, "Yet a plague—just one more—I will bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt, [after which] he will send you away from here. [Indeed when he lets you go], he will do so completely: [you will be driven out]—he will drive you away from here.

2 [You must speak firmly] in the ears of the people, [that they must ask]—[each man] of [his fellow man] [and each woman] of [her woman friend]: [ornaments of silver], and ones of gold."

3 [And God disposed]—[YHWH did put] the favor of the people into the eyes of *Mitzrayim*, [and it happened that] the man Moses was great indeed in the land of Egypt, [end aliyah] in the eyes of Pharaoh's servants, and in the eyes of the people.

4 And said Moses, "Thus says YHWH, 'At around midnight I will go forth among the Egyptians.

5 [And there will die] [every first-born] of *Eretz Mitzrayim* [from the first-born] of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the first-born of the slave-girl who sits behind the millstones, and every first-born among the cattle.

6 [And there will be] a great cry of anguish in all *Eretz Mitzrayim*, the likes of which there has [never been], and the likes of which there would not be again.

7 [And yet among] the children of Israel, [there will not] [wag a dog] [even its tongue] [against a man] [or against any beast], so that you will know that indeed, distinguished YHWH between Egypt and Israel.'

8 [They will come down]—[all your officials]—they will come to me, and bow [before me, saying], '[Get out], both you [and all the people] [who walk in your footsteps]. [Only then] [will I depart].'" And he left Pharaoh's presence [with burning anger].

9 Then said YHWH to Moses, "He still will not heed you, [this Pharaoh]. [It is so that I] can do many marvels in the land of Egypt.

10 So Moses and Aaron [had performed] all these marvels—great wonders, in the presence of Pharaoh.

But strengthened by YHWH was the heart of Pharaoh: he would not send *B'nei Yisrael* [from his land].

The Passover

12:1 And spoke YHWH to Moses and to Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,
2 [Let this month]—[this very month]—[be for you] the head of the months. The first it shall be for you of all the months of the year.
3 [And you must speak] [to the whole community] of Israel saying, [On the tenth day] of this very month,
[they must] [take for themselves]—[each one must take]—a lamb, by his father's house, one lamb per household.
4 [And if there be too few] [in a house] to eat one lamb, he must take it—[the man of the house], [along with his neighbor],
one who lives near his house, [figuring the number] of souls, [each one] by what he can eat; [thus you will count] [toward the lamb].
5 A lamb [that is without blemish]—a male one-year-old, you must take, from among the sheep or from the goats, you must take it.
6 [It will be entrusted] to you for safekeeping [till the day] which is [the four and tenth]—[the fourteenth day] of [the current month].
[they must then slaughter] [the animal]—[the entire assembly] *Kahal Yisrael*, “between the darkenings”—*i.e.* at twilight.
7 They must take some of the blood [and scatter it] onto the two doorposts, [and on the beam above the door],
[the doors] [of those] houses of which they eat of the sacrifice, [in them].
8 They will eat the flesh on [that same night], [roasted in fire], [with unleavened bread], [and with bitter herbs] they must eat it.
9 [Do not] partake of it raw, or even cooked in water, but rather [roasted in fire], with its head and its legs, and with its innards.
10 Do not leave any of it over, until morning. [And whatever] [is left over], [until morning] must in fire be burned.
11 [This is the way] that you must eat it: your girdle [around your waste], your sandals [on your feet], and your staff in your hand.
[And you must] [eat it] in haste. The Passover it is, to YHWH.
12 [I will pass through] [the land of Egypt], on that night. [I will strike down] [every first-born] in the land of Egypt, from man to beast,
[and on all] [the gods of Egypt], [I will render judgment]. I am YHWH.
13 [And it will be]—the blood—for you [as a sign], upon the houses in which you dwell. [And I] [will see the blood], [and I will pass you] by.
[There will not be] [for you] a plague to destroy you, [when I strike down] the land of Egypt.
14 [And it will be]—this day for you—a remembrance. You must celebrate it as a festival to YHWH,
throughout your generations. As a law for the ages, [you must observe it].

The feast of Unleavened Bread

12:15 For seven days, [you must eat] *matzah*. Indeed, by [the first day], you must have removed all leaven from your houses.

[Because, indeed] | whoever [eats *chametz*] (*i.e.* leaven), [there shall be cut off] the soul of that person from Israel, from day the first to day the seventh.

16 On [the first day], [a holy assembly], and on [the seventh day], a holy assembly there shall be for you.

[All manner of work], [you must not do on those days].

Only to prepare food [for all people], this work alone, you may do at this time.

17 [And you shall keep carefully] [the unleavened bread]. [Because of the fact], that on that very day, I will have brought out your armies, from the land of Egypt. [Thus you must observe] the day—[this same day] [throughout your generations]—as a law for all time.

18 [In the first month] (Nissan), [on the four] and tenth day—of the month in the evening, [you must eat] *matzah*, [from then right up until] the day [called the first] [and twentieth,] [the 21st of the month], in the evening.

19 For seven days, leavening must not be found in your houses. [For it will be], [if someone eats] [anything leavened], [then cut off will be] that soul from the assembly of Israel, whether he be a stranger, or a native of the land.

20 [Anything fermented], you must not eat. In all of your settlements, [end aliyah] you [must eat *matzah*].

Injunctions relating to the Passover

21 [To a convocation], [Moses called] all the elders of Israel, and said this to them,

“[You must pick out] [and take] for [yourselves a lamb], [according to your clans], and slaughter it as the Passover.

22 [And you will take] a bunch [of the hyssop plant] [and proceed to dip it] in the blood [that is in a basin], [and apply] [to the beam over the door] and to [the two doorposts] [some of the blood] that is in the basin.

[And as for you]: [there must] [not go out] any man through the door of his house, until morning.

23 [When God passes]—[YHWH goes through] [to smite the Egyptians], [He will] [see the blood] [above the doorway] and upon [the two doorposts], [then will pass over]—YHWH—[that doorway], [and will not] allow the destroyer to come into your houses, to strike.

24 You shall observe the words we say here, as a law for you and for your children, for all time.

25 [And it shall be] when you come [into the land] that [is being given] [by YHWH] [to you], just as He has said, [then you shall observe] the service we speak of.

26 [When there comes the time] that you are asked by your children, ‘[What does it mean], the service—this ritual,—[to you]?’

12:27 [Then this is what you must say]: ‘It is the sacrifice of Passover [to YHWH]—because [assuredly God did pass over] the houses of *B’nei Yisrael* in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, [and *our* houses] He spared.’ ” Then they bowed down—the people—in prostration.
28 So they went and they obeyed—the children of Israel,
[just as] [they were commanded] [by YHWH] [end aliyah] through Moses and Aaron: that did they do.

The tenth plague: death of the first-born

29 [And it came to pass] in the middle [of the night], [that YHWH] [struck down] [all of the first-born] in the land of Egypt, from the first-born of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, to the first-born of the captive, who sits in [the prison house], [as well as all] the first-born of the cattle.
30 [And stayed up Pharaoh] [on that night]—[he himself], and all his servants, [and all the Egyptians],
[and there was heard] a cry—a great outcry—in Egypt, since there was not a house of which there was not found there: death.
31 [And Pharaoh summoned] Moses and Aaron [during the night], and said,
“[Get up!] and get out from among my people, you yourselves and *B’nei Yisrael*. [Go now, I say], and serve YHWH [as you have asked].
32 Your sheep and your cattle [also take with you], just as you have asked, and go. And bring a blessing also for me.
33 [They pressed strongly]—the Egyptians—on the Israelites, so as quickly to send them out from the land,
for they said, “We are all dead!”

34 [Then carried off] [the people] their dough, before it could rise,
[along with their kneading bowls], it being wrapped in their clothing, on their shoulders.

The Egyptians plundered

35 *B’nei Yisrael* had obeyed the words of Moses, having asked of the Egyptians [items of silver] and items of gold, and clothing.
36 [And YHWH] [had granted favor] [for the people] in the eyes of the Egyptians, [so they obliged them]. Thus they despoiled Egypt.

Israel’s departure

37 [Then they travelled]—[*B’nei Yisrael*], from Rameses to Sukkoth.
[Some six hundred] [thousand men], [marching on foot]: [this many men], not counting the children.
38 A motley crew—a great multitude, went up [with them], along with sheep and cattle—livestock, a great many indeed.
39 They baked the dough that [they had brought out] [and carried from Egypt] into cakes of flatbread (*matzah*), for it had not risen.
[In fact, they had been driven] [from Egypt] and they had not been able to linger, and thus, provisions they had not made for themselves.
40 Now the sojourn of the children of Israel—the time they had dwelled in Egypt—was thirty years and four hundred years.

12:41 [And it happened] at the end of thirty years and four hundred years:

[it happened] on the very day [these years ended], [they all left]—the battalions of YHWH—from the land of Egypt.

42 A night of watch this is for YHWH [for his taking them out] from *Eretz Mitzrayim*.

This night is observed for YHWH, [a time to keep watch] for all the children of Israel, [through their generations].

Ordinances for the Passover

43 And said YHWH to Moses and Aaron, “This is the law of the Passover. [Anyone who is an alien] may not eat from it.

44 Any slave of a man, [who is bought for money]—if the man circumcises him, then the slave may eat of it.

45 A resident alien or a non-Israelite worker, may not eat of it.

46 [In one house] [it shall be eaten]. [You shall not take] [from the house] [any of the meat], outside. And a bone [you must not break from it].

47 The whole community of Israel must keep the Passover.

48 If there should dwell with you [an alien], and [he would make the Passover] [to YHWH]

[then he must circumcise], [from his household], [every male]. Then [he may come forward] [to do it].

[He is regarded] as a native of the land. But any forskinned man may not eat of it.

49 The law is one, that will be for the native and for the alien who dwells among you.

50 They observed—all *B'nei Yisrael*—just as [it was commanded] [by YHWH] to Moses and Aaron, thus did they do.

51 [And so it was], on that very day, they were brought out by YHWH,

[all of the people]—[*B'nei Yisrael*]—[end aliyah] from the land of Egypt, [by their battalions].

The first-born

13:1 Then spoke YHWH to Moses, saying,

2 “Consecrate to Me every first-born—breacher* of every womb of the children of Israel, of man or of beast. To Me, it belongs.”

The feast of Unleavened Bread

*following Everett Fox

3 Then said Moses [to the people], [Keep in remembrance] this day on which [you went out] from Egypt, from a house of slaves,

Since by strength of hand [you were brought out] [by YHWH]—[He brought you out] from there. There may not be eaten [leavened bread].

4 Today [you are going] out, in the month [of standing grain] (*Aviv*).

13:5 [And it will be] [when you have been brought] [by YHWH] to the land [of the Canaanite], of the Hittite, the Amorite, the Hivvite, and the Yebusite, which [God swore] to your ancestors to give [to them], [it being a land] flowing with milk and honey, [then you will perform] the service I speak of, in this month.

6 For seven days [you will eat] *matzah*, but on day [number seven] is a feast to YHWH.

7 *Matzahs* are to be eaten for the seven days. There shall not be seen with you [leavened bread], [and there shall not be] [seen among you] leaven [in all your borders].

8 You will explain it to your child upon that day, by saying,

“It is [because of that] [which was done] by YHWH [for me], [when I went out] from Egypt.”

9 [It shall serve] for you as a sign [upon your arm], and as a reminder between your eyes [in order that] [there shall be found] the Torah of YHWH on your tongue. Because with a hand so forceful were you brought out by YHWH from Egypt.

10 [And you shall keep] the statute we speak of [in its appointed time] from year to year.

The first-born

11 [And it shall be], [when you are brought] by YHWH to the land of the Canaanite, [just as He said] when he swore to you and to your fathers, and he gives it to you,

12 you shall set apart every breacher of the womb, to YHWH, [every breacher] | offspring [of any beast]—one that [belongs to you]—all the males are for YHWH.

13 Every breacher of a donkey you must redeem with a lamb. If you do *not* redeem it, [you must break its neck]. Every first-born [of a man] [among your sons], you must redeem.

14 [When there comes a time] [that you are asked] by your child—on the morrow—who asks you, “[What is this]?”

You must say [to him], “This is because [with a strong hand] [we were brought out] [by YHWH] from Egypt, from a house of bondage.

15 [And it came to pass], [when stubbornly] [Pharaoh refused] [to let us go], God slew—

YHWH [killed all the first-born] in the land of Egypt, from first-born of a human to first-born of a beast.

[Because of this] I offer sacrifice [to YHWH] every breacher of a womb—the males, and every first-born of my sons, I redeem.

16 [This will be a sign] on your hand and it will be for bands between your eyes, because with a strong hand [end aliyah] we were brought by YHWH [out of *Mitzrayim*].

Len Fellman's English readings with tropes

The purpose of this project is to translate *THE SONG OF THE TORAH* into English.

I work by comparing as many as ten English translations of a *pasuk* and creating a cantillated English sentence that sounds as much as possible like the Hebrew. They follow the Hebrew as closely as possible, word for word and trope by trope. The English language has an amazing flexibility, making it possible to make the English word order match that of the Hebrew quite well, allowing for some “poetic licence”, and some willingness on the part of the listener to be “carried” by the melody more than by the English syntax. The translation needs to sound good when *chanted*, but not necessarily when *spoken or read*.

Unlike most translations, these “transtropilations” are not intended to be a substitute for the Hebrew. On the contrary, they are meant to provide a “window” into the Hebrew text and its musical expression. My ideal listener knows enough Hebrew and has enough interest to follow the Hebrew in a bilingual text while the *leyner* is chanting the English version, to bring the Hebrew text to life, both *verbally* and *musically*. For this purpose I use *exactly* the same tropes in the English as in the Hebrew (almost always on the corresponding English word).

The texts can be used to do **consecutive translation**, i.e. leyning a phrase in Hebrew, followed by the corresponding phrase sung in English. Some of my recordings demonstrate this. I do this frequently when leyning for groups that either know little Hebrew, or that don't have a *chumash* in front of them.

I favor literal translations (e.g. “cut a covenant”) to call attention to Hebrew idioms, and towards simpler (even if less accurate) words (e.g. Ex. 12:7 “beam above the door” rather than “lintel”) to be easier to follow. If my readings provoke a discussion of the Hebrew, I consider that as justification for using less-than-idiomatic English. I try to find just the right balance between “literalness” and “listenable-ness”. A primary goal is throwing light on the Hebrew syntax.

In order to adapt the trope symbols to a left-to-right language like English, I *reversed* the direction of the trope symbols:

mercha tipcha munach tevir mapakh or yetiv kadma or pashta gersh gershayim telisha katana telisha gedola

(Generally speaking the *conjunctive tropes* such as mercha, munach, mapakh, kadma, and telisha katana “lean toward” the words they “conjoin” to, while the *disjunctive tropes* such as tipcha, gersh, gershayim, and telisha gedola “lean away” from the words that follow, so as to create a sense of separation.)

The trope symbol is normally placed under the accented syllable, unless it is a *pre-positive* accent (telisha gedola, placed *at the beginning* of the word or phrase) or a *post-positive* one (telisha katana or pashta, placed at the *end* of the word or phrase).

The Hebrew text frequently puts a *makkeph* (which is like a hyphen) between words in order to treat them as a single word to be chanted. I use a different system for English: If an entire English phrase is to be chanted to a single trope melody, I place it between grey brackets, as in this phrase from the Book of Lamentations:

[clings to her skirts]

The *leyner* is invited to fit this phrase to the *Eicha* “rivi'i” melody in whatever way seems most natural.

As a variant of the “grey bracket” device, I indicate pairs of tropes by “wrapping them around” the phrase which have the combined melody:

mercha/tipcha	kadma/geresh (or: azla, etc.)	mercha siluk
⌞Renew our days⌟	⌞She weeps bitterly⌟	⌞a fire-offering to God⌟

Again, the *leyner* should decide on the most natural way to fit the phrase to the combined trope melody.

I put words in gray which I consider essential but which don’t strictly match the Hebrew. I also “pad” some phrases with extra words in gray to fill out a musical phrase nicely. Different trope systems vary widely in the length of the musical phrase used, so the words in gray may or not be used depending on the *leyner*’s cantillation system. In particular, the tropes *telisha g’dola* (ר), *legarmeh*, *metigah-zakef*, and *pazer* vary widely in the musical phrases used for chanting. (And please indulge me in my whimsical treatments of *shalsholet*.)

“*Metigah-zakef*” is a special trope combination which can be recognized by a kadma and a zakef katon appearing on the same Hebrew word (again, a *makkeph* makes two words into one). (There are several examples in Genesis 18 & 19, beginning with 18:16). I indicate this by placing the corresponding English phrase in grey brackets:

[Take heed—take care for yourself]

In some trope systems (viz. cantor Moshe Haschel in “Navigating the Bible II”) this is given a distinctive melody—I add extra syllables to fill out the musical phrase (as in “take care” in this example). Haschel’s system also chants the trope *munach* as *legarmeh* more often than other systems do.

I don’t write a single word of translation without first hearing the melody of the phrase in my mind, following one of two trope systems: The one by Portnoy and Wolff (*The Art of Cantillation*) or the one by Joshua R. Jacobson (*Chanting the Hebrew Bible*).

I transcribe the name יהוה as YHWH (in small caps). I almost always chant this as *yud-hey-vav-hey*, which I have discovered fits marvelously into several of the trope melodies. But of course the *leyner* can choose to pronounce it as “God” or “Adonai”.

Warning on the Hebrew text: The text I use for the English trope system is from Aryeh Kaplan; the Hebrew text I display is from Wikisource. Occasionally (but rarely) a phrase will use different tropes in the two systems.

The English translations I mostly use (besides several scholarly commentaries) are the following:

Aryeh Kaplan, ‘The Living Torah’ (1981) (also my source for proper names & transliterations)
Richard Elliott Friedman, ‘The Bible With Sources Revealed’ (2003)
Everett Fox, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (1997)
The Stone Edition ‘Tanach’ (1996)
JPS ‘Hebrew-English Tanach’, (2nd Ed. 2000), *along with* Orlinsky, ‘Notes on the New Translation of the Torah’ (1969)
Robert Alter, ‘The Five Books of Moses’ (2004)
Commentaries in the ‘Anchor Bible’ series
Rotherham, The Emphasized Bible (1902)
The Jerusalem Bible (1966) (also my source for topic headings)
The New King James Bible (1982)